

LIST OF CURRENT CLAIMS

Claims 1- 24 (Cancelled)

25. (New) A steam automatic dispensing device for preparing either or both hot and frothed drinks, comprising:

a first duct (13) arranged to introduce steam from a steam source (27) into a drink within a container;

a second duct (15) arranged to introduce air from an air source (35) or steam from a steam source into the drink;

an electronic control unit configured to control the introduction of steam only through said first and second ducts (13,15), or steam alone through said first duct (13) and air alone through said second duct (15), said control unit including a microprocessor programmable to carry out a predetermined control cycle depending on a desired drink to be prepared;

first and second three-way electrovalves (14, 16) arranged to control the introduction of steam through both said first and second ducts (13,15), while enabling or preventing introduction of air through said second duct (15), wherein the operation of said electrovalves is controlled by said electronic control unit;

a third duct (33) arranged to receive air from a source of air (35);

a fourth duct (29) arranged to receive steam from a steam source;

a fifth duct (31,37) arranged to receive steam from a steam source;

said second electrovalve providing communication between said third duct (35) and said second duct (15) in a first valve position to thereby enable air to be drawn into said second duct (15) in its first valve position, and providing communication between said fifth duct (31.37) and said second duct (15) in a second valve position, to thereby enable steam to be supplied through both said first and second ducts (13, 15) while air is excluded from being drawn into said second duct (15) when in its second valve position; and

said first electrovalve providing communication between said fourth duct (29) and said first duct (13) in a first valve position, to thereby enable steam to be supplied to said first duct (13) in its first valve position.

26. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 25, wherein first electrovalve (14) provides communication between said fourth duct (29) and both said first duct (13) and said fifth duct (31) in a second valve position, thereby enabling steam to be supplied to both said first and second

ducts (13, 15) when said first electrovalve is in its second valve position and said first electrovalve (14) is in its second valve position. .

27. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 25, wherein said first electrovalve (14) provides communication between said fourth duct (29) and the outside environment in a second valve position.

28. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 25, wherein said first duct (13) has a closed end adapted for immersion in a drink within a container and is provided with a radial hole (17) near said closed end.

29. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 28, wherein said second duct (15) has an end adapted for immersion in a drink within a container, and said end of said second duct includes an axial opening (21) located in front of said radial hole of said first duct.

30. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 25, wherein said microprocessor includes a memory containing instructions for opening and closing cycles of said electrovalves, said microprocessor arranged to selectively control opening and closing of said electrovalves in accordance with said instructions.

31. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 30, wherein said memory contains instructions relevant to the carrying out of a plurality of opening and closing cycles of said electrovalves, and wherein said electronic control unit comprises a selector to select a desired cycle.

32. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 31, including a temperature detecting electronic probe adapted for immersion in a drink in a container, said probe generating a temperature-indicative signal that is received and processed by said microprocessor to control selective opening and closing of said electrovalves.

33. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 31, wherein one of said opening and closing cycles of said electrovalves results in the valve positions of said electrovalves (14, 16) being controlled during a first part of such cycle such that said first and second valves (14,16) are set respectively at their second valve positions, so that steam from a steam source is introduced

simultaneously through both said first (13) and second (15) ducts and the introduction of air from an air source is prevented, and during a second part of the cycle said first and second valves (14,16) are set respectively at their first valve positions so that steam from a steam source is introduced through said first duct (13) and air from an air source may be drawn through said second duct (15), and during a third part of the cycle, said first and second valves (14,16) are set respectively at their second valve positions so that steam from a steam source is introduced simultaneously through both said first and second ducts (13,15) and the introduction of air from an air source is prevented.

34. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 33, wherein said cycle parts are controllable by the microprocessor so as to each have a pre-set duration.

35. (New) The dispensing device according to claim 32, wherein said cycle parts are controllable by the microprocessor so as to each have a pre-set duration, and further wherein the duration of said cycle parts is variable by said microprocessor in accordance with said temperature-indicative signal received from said temperature probe.